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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
26 October 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Reactions Abroad to Vietnam Protest
Demonstrations in the US

SUMMARY

1. In general, demonstrations against US Vietnam policy abroad on 15-16 October were less extensive than anticipated. In Western Europe there were a number of such demonstrations, but attendance was very light. In Latin America, there was minimal response and in Asia and Africa virtually none. Reports from these areas are summarized in Annex A.

2. No demonstrations were reported from Communist countries. The Communist press, however, gave the expected heavy coverage to the demonstrations in the United States. These activities are summarized in Annex B.

State Dept. review completed

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ANNEX A

EUROPE

United Kingdom

Left-wing and pacifist groups carried out their plans to demonstrate against US actions in Vietnam, but the results were only a pale reflection of previous efforts such as the Easter marches sponsored by the Committee of 100.

The US Embassy in London reported that the maximum number of demonstrators at the embassy at any one time was 800. The Committee of 100's rally in Trafalgar Square was reported by the press as a quiet and uneventful affair, with speakers receiving only polite applause.

The London press gave the UK demonstrations only moderate coverage with no pictures. However, the Times and Guardian did give heavy front-page play to the demonstrations in the US, with Alstair Cooke reporting demonstrations "on a bigger scale than any since the war."

Canada

As expected, demonstrations of Canadian students centered in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto. The number of participants was small.

The US Embassy in Ottawa was picketed by 15 "youngsters" representing Carleton University's Vietnam Day Committee. One hundred twenty-five students from McGill University and Sir George William University attended a Montreal rally protesting American action. Former premier Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana addressed the gathering, saying he had been refused entry to the US to speak to similar gatherings there.

In Toronto an anti-US rally attracted 830 students--330 of whom were Americans. The demonstration was sponsored by eight predominantly leftist organizations, including the Young Communist League, Students United for Peace Action, and the Toronto International Vietnam Day Committee.

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Scandinavia

The demonstrations in the US inspired various groups in Scandinavia to similar activity, but this was limited to small groups of protesters who appeared to be generally ignored by the public.

In Stockholm on 16 October a group of some 80-100 demonstrators carrying placards protesting the use of gas and napalm were admitted to the US Embassy, where they presented a petition to a duty officer. Earlier that day, five members of the Communist-infiltrated "Swedish Vietnam Committee" were received by an embassy officer who accepted a relatively mild petition. The embassy notes that this particular group was composed of pacifists and ban-the-bombers.

In Copenhagen some 50-60 demonstrators assembled quietly outside the US Embassy carrying signs and placards. The group dispersed after its representatives had presented the marine guard with a petition, supported by four left-wing and Communist groups, which reiterated the standard charges against the US. Reportedly a meeting on Vietnam will be held in Copenhagen on 15 November under the sponsorship of the left-wing youth group Studenter Samfundet.

The Oslo police granted the Communist-front Norwegian Women's Federation permission to hold a two-hour demonstration outside the US Embassy on 15 October. This was an orderly gathering which placed candle-lit placards calling for "peace in Vietnam" outside the embassy premises.

According to the New York correspondent of Sweden's largest newspaper, the Swedish Embassy in Washington has indicated that Prime Minister Erlander wishes to meet President Johnson during his trip to the US next month in order to explain the Swedish attitude on Vietnam.

Belgium

About 900 leftists demonstrated in Brussels on 16 October in protest against the US military effort in Vietnam. Most Belgian papers carried limited, inside-page news items on this demonstration

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and those in the US. French-language TV gave substantial pictorial coverage of the major demonstrations.

Switzerland

In response to an appeal put forth by the youth section of the Swiss Communist Party, 50 persons demonstrated in front of the American Consulate in Zurich. Counterdemonstrators introduced an element of confusion which made it difficult for observers and passersby to determine who was for and against what. Press coverage of the incident was light, with all articles pointing to Communist sponsorship.

Austria

The student organization of the Austrian Communist Party distributed leaflets in the area of the University of Vienna urging support for the "days of protest" sponsored by the Berkeley committee. The appeal failed to provoke demonstrations over the week-end anywhere in Austria.

Netherlands - Luxembourg

There were no demonstrations in the Netherlands or Luxembourg. Some Luxembourg papers gave considerable coverage to the demonstrations in the US, particularly to the statements of the student who burned his draft card.

West Germany

The North Rhine-Westphalia branch of the International of War Resisters conducted a demonstration near the grounds of the US Embassy in Bonn on 15 October. The demonstration was well monitored by the local police and was reported to be orderly.

In West Berlin the Free German Youth (FDJ), the Communist youth organization, failed to demonstrate on 15 and 16 October as it had originally planned. According to the US Mission in Berlin, the FDJ had been contacted by the Vietnam Day Committee.

The demonstrations in the US were covered factually by the public media in West Germany, but there was little editorial comment.

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Italy

A "Rome University Committee for International Vietnam Day" organized a day of protest against the war in Vietnam for 16 October. The US Embassy in Rome believes the "Rome Committee" is an ad hoc Communist front organized by the Italian Communist party (PCI) as part of the PCI propaganda effort on behalf of the American Vietnam Day Committee's activities. Notably absent from participation in these plans were the Nenni Socialists (PSI). The embassy has not reported on the results of planned demonstrations in Rome or elsewhere, but previous Italian Communist activities against US policy in Vietnam have received little popular support. There have been no indications that the Moro government believes the activities in connection with Vietnam Day will have any effect on US policy in Southeast Asia.

France

The government-controlled radio-TV and the French press, with the exception of L'Humanité, gave the 15-16 October demonstrations of the Berkeley VDC prominent but factual treatment. A meeting on 15 October organized by the left-wing Union des Etudiants de France was unexpectedly small, with only 500-600 students attending. Further demonstrations are possible, however, and French students reportedly are planning an "International University Week Against War in Vietnam" on 18-25 November to show solidarity with US students. There has been no official French reaction which would indicate that Paris believes the demonstrations will affect US policy in Vietnam.

Spain - Portugal

As anticipated, no companion "Vietnam Day" demonstrations were reported in Spain or Portugal.

LATIN AMERICA

Efforts in Latin America to mount sizable demonstrations on 15 and 16 October to protest US actions in Vietnam were completely unsuccessful. Students and American citizens in a number of countries had received

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circulars from the "Committee for Vietnam Day" in Berkeley, California, and from a "Committee of Americans Abroad for an Honorable Foreign Policy," located in Santiago, Chile. Response to these appeals was triflingly small throughout the area.

No activities of any sort were noted in several countries that had received the propaganda, including Brazil and Uruguay. In Uruguay, the lack of interest in Vietnam Day may be traceable to the preoccupation of those Uruguayans most likely to get involved in such activities with an internal politico-economic crisis. A similar preoccupation with domestic affairs may also have contributed to a lack of enthusiasm for the project in other countries of the area.

In Mexico--which like Uruguay had been braced for demonstrations of some significance--only a few students at the National University in Mexico City met on the Vietnam Day theme on 15 and 16 October. Evidently only about 50 students in all were involved, and their meetings were restricted to the campus. In Argentina, a few poorly attended meetings took place at the University of Buenos Aires.

In Chile, two local Communist-front organizations called for a meeting on Vietnam in Santiago on 15 October. Only about 20 people reportedly showed up, and the event was marked by a singular lack of enthusiasm.

In British Guiana, American-born pro-Communist leader Janet Jagan led ten demonstrators who picketed the US Consulate in Georgetown for a two-hour period on 16 October. No incidents were reported.

ASIA-AFRICA

The Berkeley appeal elicited virtually no response in the non-Communist countries of Asia-Africa. There was only spotty news coverage prior to the 15 October target date, and there have been no subsequent reports of successful demonstrations.

Some leftist and student organizations made plans to demonstrate, but these apparently collapsed for a

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variety of reasons related to local conditions. For example, Nigerian student and labor groups were ready to take action, but were denied government permission because of the unsettled aftermath of recent Nigerian elections. Students, including some Americans, at the university in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, were also refused permission by President Nyerere's office, possibly because Nyerere has been showing his best face to the West lately. In Japan, the leftists had been disappointed in the poor turnout against the Korean-Japanese treaty on 12 October and were either unable or disinclined to try another show of strength.

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ANNEX B

THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Although the Berkeley organizers of the protest movement had claimed that sympathetic demonstrations would be held in many foreign countries including some behind the Iron Curtain, none in fact were staged in the Sino-Soviet bloc nations.

These bloc countries, as expected, have energetically exploited the demonstrations in the US in their propaganda denouncing "US aggression" in Vietnam.

The Soviet Union has asserted that US officials had been conducting a "brainwashing" campaign in an effort to combat growing criticism of US policy but are now compelled to recognize that the demonstrations "constitute a serious factor." Moscow claims that Washington has adopted "scare" and "witch-hunt" tactics to counter the protests.

The claim by US organizers that sympathetic demonstrations would be held in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary did not materialize. These and the other East European countries did, however, give the demonstrations wide propaganda coverage but no coordinated theme was discernible in their commentaries.

Communist China, North Vietnam, and North Korea also gave heavy propaganda play to the demonstrations in the US. As expected, they endeavored to convey the impression of growing antagonism between the American public and Washington officialdom.

Below are some representative samples of the propaganda statements of various Sino-Soviet bloc countries.

USSR

"The unusually strong and wide scope of the protest demonstrations--millions of people have taken part in the last few days--has aroused serious concern among the ruling circles of the US and of other countries which support the aggressive US policy.... The authorities have started an extensive campaign of repression against the participants in the antiwar

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demonstrations....The President fully approves of the measures planned by the Department of Justice... and an obviously inspired slander campaign against the participants has begun....One can see every sign of the beginning of a frantic witch hunt with the help of which American reaction intends to intimidate and stifle the progressive forces of the country....It is difficult to make anybody believe that the 100,000 persons who participated in the latest antiwar demonstrations are being incited by the Communists. The movement against the aggressive US policy in Vietnam is rapidly gaining momentum...."

"Americans Ashamed of America" was the headline in the 18 October issue of Izvestia. "Washington is alarmed," the article declared. "The purpose of the new witch hunting is to frighten opponents of the war in Vietnam. Washington is afraid of further growth of the antiwar movement."

Eastern Europe

East Germany's Neues Deutschland commented on 19 October that the American people were beginning to exercise their "right of co-determination" in foreign policy. It added that the escalation of fighting in Vietnam, of which President Johnson and "his sponsors" were proud, was now creating an escalation of conscience in the US.

The Polish youth paper Sztandar Mlodych said that for the first time one could speak of "an open political revolt" by the younger generation of Americans, but warned against overestimating the demonstrations' impact on US policy. However, it concluded that the demonstrations, coupled with world public opinion, might force the US to cease its aggression and commence negotiations.

Czechoslovak and Yugoslav news commentaries mentioned the reaction in the US to the demonstrations. Whereas the Czechs saw a "rise of terror" and President Johnson's drawing closer to the right wing, the Yugoslavs gave a factual account of various events colored only by a reference to a "wave of protests" sweeping the US.

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FAR EASTERN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Communist China

Peking papers depicted a rising tide of protest throughout the US. An editorial in the authoritative People's Daily asserted that the "American people are confronted with the real danger of a large-scale ground war imposed on them by the Johnson administration," and portrayed the public as willing to take to the streets "braving tear gas shells" so as to end "the aggressive war in Vietnam." Emphasis on a groundswell of popular dissent was a common element in most commentary broadcast from Peking over the past week. The demonstrations were depicted as having taken place in all sections of the country, on "an unprecedented scale" and involved people "from all walks of life."

North Vietnam

Hanoi propaganda exulted over the current wave of Vietnam protests in the US, lavishly praising "the large-scale gatherings held coast to coast" which demonstrated the "high tide of the struggle of the US people" against the government's policy. News media reported that "tens of thousands" vigorously protested the war. Party daily Nhan Dan in an editorial on the 16th pointed out that the American people are "realizing more clearly" the "unjust" nature of the US action. It attempted to establish an identity of interest between the actions of the American demonstrators and the efforts of the Vietnamese peoples to resist the aggression of the US.

North Korea

Reaction from Pyongyang was similar in tone and content to that from Peking and Hanoi. A commentary broadcast on 19 October claimed that the "present large-scale antiwar movement is unprecedented in the history of the US." An editorial in Nodong Sinmun the following day struck a similar note.

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DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE US

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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